

The Library Assistant:

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EDITORIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Thirty-Second Session will be held on **Wednesday, 6th October, 1926.**

Afternoon.—A tour of **Lincoln's Inn**, visiting the Library, Hall, Chapel, etc., by permission of the Masters of the Bench. Members should assemble at 3.15 p.m. at the **Old Gateway** of Lincoln's Inn, in Chancery Lane.

Evening.—Inaugural Meeting in the **Council Chamber, Lincoln's Inn**, at 7.30 p.m. **Mr. Desmond McCarthy**, the well-known critic and essayist, will give an address on "The Bubble Reputation." The chair will be taken by the President of the Association.

Junior Section.—A short informal meeting will be held at 7 p.m. for the purpose of electing a new Honorary Secretary in succession to Miss Riches.

The Council will meet at 6 p.m. at **Lincoln's Inn**.

Dance.—Members are asked to reserve **November 24th**, the date set aside for the next A.A.L. Dance.

Classes for Assistants.—The Classes for Assistants will be conducted in the majority of cases by *Correspondence*. Oral classes will only be arranged where the conductor happens to be a member of a large library system and can in consequence arrange for an oral class for assistants employed in the same system. Members of Divisions should write to their *Divisional Honorary Secretary*; members not attached to Divisions can obtain full particulars from Miss E. M. Exley, Public Library, Gloucester Place, London, W.1.

Mr. A. J. K. Esdalle, Assistant Keeper, Department of Printed Books, British Museum, has been appointed Secretary of the Museum. All our readers know Mr. Esdalle, at any rate by name if not personally, and will join in offering him congratulations on his appointment and at the same time express the hope as we do, that it will not mean his complete severance from active librarianship.

New Members.—Divisional Secretaries are requested to notify names of new members *direct* to the Hon. Secretary, Mr. G. P. Jones, B.A., Public Library, Bancroft Road, Mile End, E.1.

A.A.L. Series.—The following are still in print and can be obtained of Mr. W. Benson Thorne, Public Library, Brunswick Road, Poplar, E.14, at 6d. each, plus postage $\frac{1}{4}$ d. on each copy.

- No. 1. Grammar of Classification. By W. C. Berwick Sayers.
- No. 5. Ideals: Old and New. By E. Wyndham Hulme, B.A.
- No. 6. The Library Committee. By W. C. Berwick Sayers.
- No. 7. First Steps in Library Routine. By W. Benson Thorne.
- No. 8. First Steps in Library Cataloguing. By W. Benson Thorne.
- No. 9. First Steps in Annotation. By W. C. Berwick Sayers.

Library Association Examinations.—The following extracts from the "Record," September, 1926, p. 156, should be carefully noted.

"On the recommendation of the Education Committee it was resolved that the Special Period for the Correspondence Course, in preparation for the May examination, 1927, be: Wordsworth and his Circle: with special study of the Prelude.

It was resolved that hereafter in Part I. of the Classification Examination an essay be required out of one of the following systems: Library of Congress, Brown's Subject Classification, Classification Decimale of the Institut International; and further that in Part II. of the examination candidates be required to classify at least twenty examples by the Dewey Decimal Classification only."

Space.—The Press has been agitated of late over the report that the Bodleian will, before many years are gone, require a big extension to house its books. The output of books is so enormous that it is estimated that in ten to eleven years the Bodleian will be packed tight. We realise that, theoretically, there should be a copy of every book published available for all time, but it seems that with the present rate of output—and there is not likely to be any diminution in the future—either serious consideration will have to be given to the present copyright requirements or a reduction made in the number of copies of a work already existing in the various copyright libraries.

The Wigan Annual Report states that congestion is so bad that books are "dumped about gangways with the result that they are mercilessly trodden upon."

The "Manchester City News" makes some scathing remarks on the condition of the Wigan libraries and suggests that the Libraries Committee should be up and doing.

Work of the Council.—There was little of interest in the agenda before the last meeting of the Council which was presided over by Mr. G. F. Vale, the Vice-President. The Education Committee reported that arrangements are well in hand for the forthcoming session and that the papers already promised are of such a nature that lively discussions should result.

The Vice-President and the Honorary Secretary recited their experiences at the L. A. Conference. It is very gratifying to be able to report that through the instrumentality of the Vice-President various County Councils are to be approached with a view to their granting further facilities for Library Assistants along the lines of the generous action of the London County Council as indicated in our last issue. The interview with the L.C.C. authorities has produced a result which may well be the herald of a new era in the training of library assistants.

The New Session will be upon us almost as soon as the Journal reaches our readers. This year we have been fortunate in being able to give good notice of the Inaugural meeting so that no Assistant can plead prior engagements. We want very full meetings, not only at the inaugural function, but throughout the year. Next month we hope to be able to print the complete programme for the Session so that the dates of meetings can be noted in the diaries of our members.

Attendances, generally speaking, have been large, but we want them still larger. The Education Committee are going to make a determined attempt to increase the size of our meetings by circularising those districts which do not contribute a fair proportion to the audience. By this means it is expected that a reasonable increase in numbers will be apparent.

But that is not sufficient. There are the discussions. Too often the same people contribute; naturally we like to hear them. Nevertheless, we are certain that there are quite a number of other useful speakers among our members, both men and women, who have pronounced and definite ideas on most subjects. Those ideas and opinions should not be kept unspoken, but on the contrary should be expressed in discussion. We hope we shall not appeal in vain and, that in consequence the discussions will be carried on with life and fervour far into the night.

THE LIBRARY AND THE SCHOLAR.

By MAJOR VERNON BROWN, O.B.E. (MIL.), M.Sc.,
Lecturer in Education, Armstrong College, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

I appreciate the opportunity of responding to Mr. Patterson's invitation to address the Association of Assistant Librarians. It seems an acknowledgment of indebtedness to him for his courtesy and help.

The pleasure is still greater if I can contribute even a small share to the interest of such social workers as Librarians. They are wisely chosen to help the readers. In all libraries which I have used I have experienced an atmosphere of sympathy and kindness which has made me think very highly of the character of those who manage so successfully our excellently equipped libraries. I hope to help more by raising points for discussion than by a personal contribution to the solutions of the difficulties which confront us when we endeavour to introduce our school children to the wealth of the libraries; to inspire them to be searchers after the truth and partakers of the pleasure which may be had so cheaply, so conveniently, in our noblest public institutions.

Truth and pleasure are the direct urges we find pressing the school children to the libraries. They seek facts, of travel and discovery, of history—a single volume like a school reader is a text book of facts. It is particularly inadequate in the search for historical fact, for a historical situation must be considered in more ways than one. An exercise of judgment is demanded, and the fact of history is an opinion obtained from careful consideration of more than one point of view of an event, a movement, or a tendency. The urge of the libraries is, I believe, a personal and intimate one, possessed by each child who uses a library. The main inspiration behind the urge is in the home, or in the school. A secondary inspiration, which I wish to show should be still stronger than it is at present, is in the *personnel* of the library. The pleasure which comes from reading, for school children, lies in interesting doings of people, and especially of young people. The pleasure of the contemplative type which comes from the beautiful descriptions of things—of flowers, of woodlands, of sea and strand—is for maturer minds, and although it can be, and should be, developed in school, is not in closest touch with the main interests of boys and girls. Truth and pleasure are direct urges. Direct urges of this kind have, no doubt, a direct and immediate influence. The facts are obtained and considered, the pleasure is enjoyed. Love of, and work in, a library means more than this. By carefully selecting material the libraries introduce the scholar to an atmosphere of healthiness, whose influence on their maturer lives is incalculably important. They read thoughts which are worth while. They live in imagination through experiences of an ennobling kind. The result of it all is the development of taste for noble thoughts, and for unselfish actions. Books build character. They contribute to the development of moral tone. The spiritual uplift of well-spent leisure, the feeling of esteem with which it leaves us, and the antithesis, the feeling of degradation which comes from idle wasting time, or from following a pursuit which we know to be unworthy, are doubtless personal experiences for many of you, as they are for me. Imagine anyone who is so accustomed to idling, and pursuing in spare time unworthy objects that such feeling of degradation is

absent, and you imagine the worst social type we have in the country to-day. You will find them in all grades of occupation, and in all grades of accepted social status.

Look at the clubs, the public houses, the billiard rooms and you will see regular attendants, whose leisure is completely filled by tavern conversations. Imagine the man who, as soon as he is free to do so, wends his way to the club, and who, night after night, plays cards or billiards or snooker. The finish is cried at closing time. This kind of life is no fable. It is carried on by thousands of men. It is the old fault of excess. Where temperance would be tolerated, or even healthy, excess is a social disease. There is no legal wickedness. It is just a shabby and unworthy effort at life. Build up in school days a taste for literature, and such a state of affairs could not occur in an individual's history.

Now let us, for a moment, review what is being done to that end at present in our schools. Teachers, for all the faults imputed to them (for which I for one am not prepared to admit), are never failing in this matter. They use their influence to interest each scholar who is old enough, to take the opportunities the libraries offer. In the elementary schools of this district, their influence is enormous. Table I. gives figures from an elementary school in this district.

TABLE I.

MIXED SCHOOL.

Standard.	No. in Class.	Library Members.	Per cent.
V. ...	41 ...	14 ...	34
VI. ...	48 ...	30 ...	63
VII. ...	28 ...	21 ...	75
		65	

Remaining with this school for a few moments let us see just what these members of libraries like to read, and why. An analysis of the confessions of the sixty-five scholars consulted is shown in Table II.

TABLE II.

Adventure Stories	30
Boarding School Stories	12
Historical Stories	6
Comic Cuts	4
Boys' Own Paper or Girls' Own Paper...	3
Handicraft	3
Fairy Tales	2
Detective	2
School Books	1
Shakespeare	1
Natural History	1
	65

I can best describe tastes by reading one or two open confessions :—

"The books I like best are very exciting adventurous ones such as *The Red True Story*, and when I read these kind of books I feel as if I am there too."

"The kind of books that I like best are books of natural history. I like these books, because it is interesting to know the habits of animals and animal instinct. It also helps me to untangle the mysteries of nature."

"I like to read a book about *School Life at a Boarding School* best. I like to read these books best because they make me feel as though I was in among the girls who are playing these daring tricks at school, and I get to know how other girls live."

"I find much pleasure in a book about school life. I like it because the author generally writes about sport and as I am interested in sport I like to read about boarding school life and imagine myself on the playing fields there."

"The writings I enjoy reading mostly are plays by Shakespeare, and I am keenly interested in the lives of foreign people. I like to peer into their modes of living to see how they differ from those of my own country. The former I like extremely as they have a distinct meaning."

Adventure Stories show an inclination towards travel and dangers in other lands. Twenty-six out of our thirty liked tropical adventures. The interest in the doings of real people was marked. The scholar places himself in the position of the hero. For a while, in imagination, he leads this life. Many thus have a definite historical and geographical bias.

Boarding School Stories.—Here the girls find their adventures. Here again the personal participation is a feature of the confessions. In spite of the latter day equality of sexes, the scholars find no interest in the doings of men in tropical countries. Tradition of the writings is against them. Women must be adventurers and record their adventures before such an instinct will grow.

History.—This is just real adventure. It shows emphasis on battles and heroes, it embraces an apparently natural curiosity concerning the annals of the past, which must have a very deep psychological basis in the history of the race, and in the history of the individual.

Special Papers.—"The Scout" and "Boys' Own." Again the boy hero of adventures is the appeal.

Types of Story.—Some frankly vote for short stories, others make note of a preference for long ones. We have no means of finding out the truth of these confessions. As, however, the children were not giving names, and could say whatever they pleased—and they show throughout the returns that they were doing so—I am inclined to accept the truth of these confessions without question. I know the school, and the headmaster and his staff.

Such figures give a clear indication of the interests we must touch to lead scholars into the habits of reading. From the exciting adventure of the children's book we should lead to the exciting adventures of books of standard literature. Encourage the geographical and historical interests. Let them lead to interest in industry, commerce

and politics. Let the lives of the heroes of fiction lead to the biographies of the heroes of real life. The descriptive travel tales strengthen the appeal of the finer forms of expression ; until, finally, you have established in the soul a love of poetry and of the noblest prose. Guidance from teachers and librarians is here essential. Many books are dull in parts. The adult finds reflection and grace in the full parts ; his wider experience of life makes the musings and descriptions of the writer of considerable interest to him. Not so with the child. Even Dickens, so popular with old and young, cannot sustain a child's interest throughout his books. Yet he has adventures as thrilling as any in Henty or Ballantyne, or as those found within the covers of the comic paper.

Literature should make a claim, should be insistent with its claim, and should obtain a hold on the child's leisure time. It must compete with numerous influences which, on the whole, tend to the shabby and irresponsible life I dared to depict earlier.

Let me give a few facts about two of these influences which, though they may not be moral sores, are nevertheless well worth consideration. They should be crowded out of experience by better things. They are among the "causes which conspire to blind man's erring judgment and misguide the mind." First, I attack the comic papers. Here I am most concerned with the standard of English used by the writers. There are bad, and not so bad, comics. Table III. shows the facts about the reading of comic papers by scholars in the school referred to in Table I.

TABLE III.					
Standard.		No. in Class.	Regular comic papers.		
V.	...	41	...	17	44%
VI.	...	48	...	24	50%
VII.	...	28	...	10	37%

The popular comic is the cheap one, "The Funny Wonder," featuring Charlie Chaplin.

The objection, as I have said, is chiefly against the slang words which form so much of the dialogue and descriptions of the pictures. May I be permitted to illustrate ?

"So they took themselves along a dark and dismal tunnel where the mice frolicked and told each other fairy tales, and the cobwebs cooed. And at last, or a bit later, they came to a little ladder, and there was a nice trapdoor just above."

"'What-ho ! This is indeed the earlier early door !' cackled Willie as he nipped up the ladder, 'Come on, me comely old comrade ! I hear the conker bloke speaking his piece. This way ! And Willie shoved up the old trapdoor.'"

A secondary evil lies in the moral relationships of comic households. In one popular comic are portrayed the doings of "Marmaduke and his Ma." One stanza is sufficient.

1. "Ma got skittish one fine forenoon and playfully threw the parlour carpet at Marmy, cooing: 'Marmy, take this carpet and clean it and beat it!' 'All right, ma!' said Marmy. 'I know its pretty dusty, but you needn't throw it up in my face!'"

2. "Marmy was upset in more ways than one, and just to show his mum how he felt about it, he dumped the carpet into the rain-barrel. 'Ha, ha! that will clean it!' he chuckled. 'And now I'll beat it—beat it to the garden for a quiet read!'"

3. "Then out trotted the old dear on the warpath. 'H'm! Now that's strange!' muttered ma. 'I can't hear any beating going on! Huh! That boy of mine is a young imp! I wouldn't trust him farther than I could see him with both my eyes shut!'"

Another quotation, this time from Plato's Republic:—

"It would seem that something like the above should not be heard from early childhood by citizens who are to honour their parents."

In comic papers of the cheap and popular kind, and in certain adventure magazines, rubbishy drawing and tasteless colouring are combined with ignorant and illiterate forms of expression.

The second influence concerning which I have figures is that of the cinema.

TABLE IV.

Standard.	No. in Class.	Once a week.	Twice or more.
V. ...	41 ...	33 80%	9
VI. ...	48 ...	37 78%	6
VII. ...	28 ...	17 60%	5

That I am justified in classing the cinema with the fifth-rate weekly paper as a strong influence towards unworthy living can be proved from the evidence of Cinema Trade Papers. The following is a Trade Paper account of "The Gilded Butterfly":—

"*In Brief*: Penniless Society girl lives by fraud until she falls in love with an honest man. Many well-known players in an improbable, rather sordid story. A train wreck and a motor smash are minor thrills which enliven the action.

"*Suitability*: A sound offering for popular and many middle-class houses."

Examine a catalogue like this. You will find that cinemas are divided by the Trade as being:—

Better class houses.
Middle class houses.
Popular houses.

The popular houses are those attended by the scholars of the school I have dealt with.

People who praise the cinema as an educational force do not realise the significance of this distinction. The popular houses are, on the whole, supplied with rubbish. The Trade Paper damns the picture, and gives it to the popular houses.

Now consider the producers' comments on their own films, and notice especially the language in which the comment is couched.

"A 'sure-fire' story, an interest provoking title, and an attractive cast make 'Virtue's Revolt' a pleasing production from the box-office angle. Wherever audiences may be interested in the picturization of the age-old battle between the forces of good and evil—with virtue triumphant—exhibitors will gross satisfactorily with this photo-drama.

STORY.

"Strelsa Cane, a successful stock actress, comes to New York and meets with reverses in her endeavour to get a start on the New York stage. Through a ruse she finally sees Winthrope, a successful manager, who is impressed with her ability but demands that she make a dishonourable bargain with him as the price of stardom. She refuses. Put out of her room for non-payment of rent, she seeks refuge in a house to which she has found the keys. Steve, the brother of the owner, finds her and denounces her, believing she is the woman with whom his brother has an affair. Later he learns the truth and insists that he will marry her, but she has accepted the manager's offer in desperation. Her debut proves a big success and as she prepares to keep her part of the contract Steve appears. In a fight with him, Winthrope is struck from behind the curtain by his discontented valet, and Steve and Strelsa decide to go West and begin all over again together.

"The title, 'Virtue's Revolt,' is one that will provoke interest, and it should be played up. Feature the names of Edith Thornton and Niles Welch.

"Run a contest through the paper offering prizes of passes for the best letters written by girls telling of their experiences in securing positions."

This indicates some of the competing forces against which schools and libraries must contend. I wish our national Censor, and our civic chiefs, would take a stronger line in this matter.

The fact that these cinema plays are passed by the Censor has a strongly suggestive effect. All these amusements which we uncritically permit, and even encourage, are among the causes which lead the individual to esteem cheap and easily obtained excitement, shabby and unworthy thoughts and habits of life far above the dignified, noble, and immensely more lasting joys of the higher pleasures, not the least of which is that provided by the libraries.

Of course we know that adults love the poor picture, and that children are often definitely encouraged to go there by their parents. Adult taste is poor. How guilty are we when we permit ourselves to hear without a shudder some of the songs which come over the wireless associated with jazz music? How can we tolerate this kind of thing?

If you like a Ukulele lady,
Ukulele lady like-a-you,
If you like to linger where it's shady,
Ukulele lady linger too.

Or this sentiment :—

Pal of my cradle-days,
I've needed you always ;
Since I was a baby upon your knee
You sacrificed ev'rything for me, etc.

Here we have ignorant and illiterate forms of expression, associated with rhythmic, but otherwise unenlightened and tasteless music.

How best to deal with the scholars in the library is a matter which you are studying very closely yourselves.

That there must be closest co-operation between library staffs and the school staffs, and between libraries, is essential. I have an admiration for the loan system in Gateshead, whereby books suitable for scholars are continuously in possession of the schools. But even this system has its faults. The teacher is not always at hand to guide. School years are short. The librarian is at hand to guide both the nervous ten-year-old or the tottering old age pensioner. Under the Gateshead system the habit of using a library is not developed, though a taste for books, which may lead to the free use of the library, is cultivated. It still remains a system outside the library.

At Sunderland I believe there is a special library for children, and most excellent, a specially apportioned librarian to advise. The only difficulty seems to lie in the switching of the child from the special library to the main library. For it is essential that the library should be progressive, without break of any kind, for all ages. Even the segregation of the juvenile class of books is open to some objection. You have books grouped by subject matter, that ought to be sufficient. A class letter, "J" for juvenile, to indicate its suitability for the juvenile reader, would be an adequate distinction. The advice implied by the letter would be sufficient for nine hundred and ninety-nine children out of a thousand. The 1,000th could be asked the reason for his choice outside the "J" category.

The difficulty of having children all over the library and getting in the way of the over-fourteeners is great. A time set apart might meet the difficulty, and would free the library staff to attend to the needs of the scholars.

In school we are discovering that if children are treated like little men and women, they act with as much responsibility as men and women. In the libraries the same principle would hold good.

In Newcastle schools catalogues of the libraries are kept, and lesson references made to the catalogues. The Juvenile Catalogue, with its Bewick illustrations, is first class.

You will have noticed that I have dealt especially with scholars of elementary schools. Most secondary schools have libraries of their own, with technical books for each subject, and general and popular books in each class room. Some have a reading room and library combined. Only a small fringe of top scholars can make good use of such a room in any year. The tastes and habits which have been acquired in earlier years go with the scholar who is reading for his examinations. They have many text books to read, some of which must be studied intensively. A Shakespearian play treated so becomes a text book. Such specialists are likely to make good use of libraries always. They supply a bigger proportion of book lovers from their number than any other class of the youthful community.

It remains only for me to suggest one or two methods of competing with what I have described as unworthy influences. To begin with we

must spare no effort to interest children in the contents of the libraries. We must cater definitely for their needs. Enlist the co-operation of parents and older brothers and sisters. Each scholar might record his reading in a book provided for this purpose ; and library staffs should be prepared to glance from time to time at the record. Permission should be sought, by parents and teachers, to enable the children to borrow particular books from the adult section. Where school exhibitions are held the library should contribute a number of new books of quality and interest. The numbers of books in large demand should be multiplied.

Experiments in the handling of the younger section of the reading community are going on around us. Their results should be widely made known. Co-operation and conference are essential. From all the experience you can embrace, select those things which appear best for further trial. Apply them enthusiastically, for you know that your task is nothing less than contributing a very large share to the construction of the foundations of individual, and therefore of national, character

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The jubilee celebrations of the Library Association will be held next year in Edinburgh. Next to London, fewer places perhaps could be found more suitable and appropriate in which to commemorate this proud and happy event than Scotland's historic capital. As a prelude to the 50th Anniversary Leeds provided a fitting stage for this year's Conference and if the promise of the gathering finds fulfilment in next year's historic event then Edinburgh will reach a level of achievement unattained before in the records of the Association. The atmosphere of Leeds Conference was one of optimism and satisfaction ; a general spirit of good-fellowship and geniality prevailed. The hopes expressed by a writer in the " Library World " were realised. There was distinctly noticeable a tone of quiet but confident assurance. Noticeable too was the increasing number of younger men amongst the audiences and the steadily increasing number of female delegates—a sure and healthy sign of the times. The papers throughout were of excellent quality ; varied, useful and worthy of the dignity of an Annual Conference. Moreover there was some attempt at continuity and order in their arrangement and purpose. The excellent address at Birmingham delivered by last year's President led to interesting and helpful results. A happy, and more or less successful, effort was made to mould part of the programme of papers upon the development of the main line of thought expressed in that address and to face the problems of librarianship which Prof. Grant Robertson had foreshadowed. Another day's programme was devoted to the ordered consideration

of the place and value of public libraries as the homes of historical research and record. This carefully chosen topic was especially fortunate and opportune at the present day in view of the changing method of approach to and treatment of history and the large interest now stimulated in local history and records. The relegation of the social side of the Conference to a less important position was particularly marked and is a promising sign of the determination of the L. A. executive to take this annual affair more seriously and to devote as much time as possible to matters of business. It has been a reproach against the Library Association that in recent years the social side of the programme has tended to encroach too much upon the business part of the programme and it was no doubt in order to dispose the truth of this charge that evening (and even afternoon) sessions were re-introduced this year. That the social events were fewer was no fault of our large hearted and generous hosts ; in fact they grieved that more could not be accepted.

All roads (or railways) led to Leeds on Monday, and by 8 p.m. over 400 had gathered in the City Art Gallery to enjoy the first taste of the City's hospitality. Visitors were first welcomed by the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor (Councillor John Arnott, J.P.). The whole of the ground floor was open to the guests who viewed the various art treasures splendidly arranged and the several literary collections of rare books and interesting manuscripts. The while the opportunity was taken of renewing old friendships and exchanging the experiences of the past twelve months. Pleasant sounds of music filled the air and played its part in making the evening a feast of enjoyment of the liberal arts.

Tuesday morning saw the opening of the Conference in real earnest. After the Lord Mayor had extended the usual, but none the less, appreciated official address of welcome in terms of genuine cordiality the newly-elected President, Henry Guppy, M.A., D.Phil. et Lit., delivered his Presidential Address, "Seventy Five Years." An excellent piece of work but perhaps a little uneven in quality. Dr. Guppy gave the impression that he was not altogether happy in his choice of subject. It was a brave attempt to epitomise the history of the Public Library movement. When dealing with the bare historical facts he seemed to lack inspiration and even interest himself in the subject ; but when he had an opportunity of letting his imagination play and his vision to expand he gave of his very best and stirred the audience with his splendid passages of charming and delicate English and radiated that peculiar pleasure which we all experience from contact with a mind of wide culture. Mr. L. R. McColvin followed with his paper "Books, Libraries and Politics." This proved to be a courageous and successful attempt to work out one of the lines of thought expressed in Prof. Grant Robertson's Address of 1925. Mr. McColvin in his familiar philosophical style pleaded for a more reasoned

political education of democracy and indicated the way whereby the Public Library could assist in that work of educating the masses in political matters. According to the programme Mr. L. Stanley Jast and Mr. H. D. Roberts were to follow with a discussion on "Libraries and Citizenship," following last year's Presidential Address. Mr. Jast however, ignoring Prof. Grant Robertson, concentrated himself entirely on Mr. McColvin's remarks and livened up the meeting by violently disagreeing, in true Jastonian language, with Mr. McColvin's claim for the supremacy of the intellectual over the emotional appeal to mankind. We were keyed up to the expectation of a real old verbal display of fire-works but relentless time put an end to the morning's proceedings and the sequel had to be postponed until the evening's session. We were forced to close down for courtesy's sake alone as at 1 p.m. luncheon in the magnificent town hall awaited us at the generous invitation of the Libraries and Arts Committee. The afternoon was devoted to the relaxation of a garden party at Roundhay Park, by kind invitation of the owner Sir Edward Allen Brotherton, Bart, LL.D. The visitors on arriving at the Park were welcomed by Sir Edward, and then conducted through part of his modest mansion where the wonderful and famous literary treasures of our host were exhibited for our pleasurable inspection—and secret envy. The collection contained choice specimens of illuminated manuscripts, examples of Early English printing, and first editions of great books in English and French literature—the Bible, Caxton, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare (the four folios), Milton, Hugo, and many other famous names. Moreover there were also to be seen examples of the choicest and handsomest bindings from the first beginnings of the art. Happy man indeed is he to possess such exquisite taste and happier still is he who is able to indulge and satisfy that taste. Tea on the lawns to the strains of soothing music completed the pleasures of the visit. As a souvenir of the day our host had had specially prepared a really luxurious publication containing reproductions of the title pages of most of his many famous books with suitable letterpress descriptions. This beautiful work was offered at the price of 1s. (although it must have cost at least ten times that amount to produce) for as Sir Edward wisely remarked, a thing which cost nothing is rarely appreciated. He evidently knows something about librarians. From refreshment we returned to labour in the shape of the first evening session. At the outset Mr. McColvin replied to the attack of Mr. Jast—and acquitted himself with credit and distinction. The "intellect" undoubtedly won. Mr. H. D. Roberts and Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers continued the adjourned discussion on "Libraries and Citizenship." The task they were given was no doubt uncongenial and one could feel that they were treating Prof. Grant Robertson's remarks to a frivolous and cynical criticism in order to provoke a lively discussion. But it proved a slip. The official programme expressed the hope that "Members of Library Authorities

would participate in the discussion." The anticipation was perfect. The Members of Library Authorities not only participated in, but annexed entirely, the discussion which continued unflaggingly for nearly one and a half hours. An extremely encouraging result and one which should lead the L.A. executive to arrange opportunities for more and longer sessions (if possible) of this character, at future Conferences.

Wednesday's mental provender did not look particularly appetising but the three addresses proved exceptionally interesting and helpful. Mr. Arundell Esdaile, M.A., gave us a charming paper on the history of the British Museum in "The Preservation of National Literature"; one graced throughout with kindly wit and gentle irony. Mr. E. W. Crossley, F.S.A., Secretary of the Yorkshire Archæological Society, followed with a very business-like paper "The Value of the Publications of the Archæological Society to a Public Library," and Mr. A. Hamilton Thompson, M.A., D.Litt., F.S.A., Professor of Mediæval History in the University of Leeds, concluded the morning's session with a delightfully written contribution "Libraries in Relation to the Study of Local Archæology and History" in which he paid many sincere and graceful tributes to the help he had received in his researches from the public library and librarians, and suggested several extremely valuable ways of utilising the resources of the public library in the service of local historians. All three papers were well and usefully discussed. In the afternoon a visit was paid to the University of Leeds where in the Great Hall speeches of welcome were made by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor J. W. Cobb, C.B.E., B.Sc., Professor Paul Barbier, M.A., Chairman of the Library Committee and Mr. R. Offor, B.A., Ph.D., the Librarian of the University. Inspections were next made of the department of leather industries, of the library, and of the chemical lecture theatre where Mr. F. C. Thompson, M.C., lectured on "Deterioration in Book Binding." Needless to add, tea was later served in the Great Hall—and was very welcome.

Thursday morning opened very quietly with a talk by Mr. Harrison of King's College, London, on the work and aims of the National Home Reading Union. This was in substitution of a paper "The Place of the National Home Reading Union in the Public Library System" to be read by Ernest Barker, M.A., D.Litt., Principal of King's College, London, who was unable to carry out his promise. Mr. Harrison pleased, as all do who are evidently madly in love with their work—and there is no doubt that in the National Home Reading Union movement Mr. Harrison is a most discerning enthusiast. But it was singularly noticeable that all the speakers who maintained the discussion on his remarks sounded a pessimistic note (otherwise unheard during the whole of the Conference), and offered him little encouragement or hope in his work—as far as the public library is concerned. The next paper received the largest "press"—of a kind—

of any delivered at this year's Conference. It was the kind of paper to appeal to "head line" journalism and provide easy and facile moralising "leaders." Mr. J. W. Singleton's "The Reader from the Librarians' Point of View" not only tickled the Press but it made his audience rather explosive, and the subsequent discussion nearly twisted itself into a heroic conflict on the altar steps of truth. However, Mr. Singleton was sadly misunderstood. He quoted extreme cases—but purposely so—and attempted, so that he should not be taken seriously, to run a stream of humour through his remarks. The audience for the most part paid him the doubtful compliment of taking him very seriously and solemnly. We all know the types of readers he described; it is sheer humbug to pretend we do not. They exist everywhere; and probably have always existed. But they are exceptional—very exceptional—and are after all, not merely types of readers but types of humanity. Prof. Grant Robertson gave us a vision (last year) a conception of things as they ought to be, and indicated how great and honourable the part we, as librarians, could play in attaining that ideal state of things. Mr. Singleton just wanted to show—and he only introduced his extreme cases to clear cut his picture—the state of things as they are. After this the morning's programme came to an end with an intimate and stimulating talk by Mr. S. C. Kaines Smith, M.B.E., M.A., F.S.A., the very progressive and enterprising Director of the City Art Gallery of Leeds on "The Art Gallery in Relation to the Public Library."

After lunch a short time was provided for a meeting of County Librarians and all others interested in County Libraries—a happy and desirable innovation—when Mr. J. D. Cowley, M.A., County Librarian of Lancashire read a paper on "The Future of County Librarians." A late afternoon trip was made to Temple Newsam Mansion and Park, a delightful spot, acquired by the Leeds Corporation in 1908. The Mansion which has been aptly called "The Hampton Court of the North," was originally a Red Cross settlement of the Knights Templars and in recent years a residence of Lord Irwin, Viceroy of India. Externally Temple Newsam is a fine example of the Jacobean period. Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson kindly gave a brief address on the history and contents of the House and helped to make the impression of the visit deeper and more lasting. Another innovation—a Round Table Talk—had to be abandoned for want of time. In the evening the customary Annual Conference Dinner took place at the Queen's Hotel. A large—in fact an over large—number attended, and a good many of the diners had to be accommodated in an annexe. But where so much good humour and feeling predominated nothing could spoil the harmony of the evening. It proved a most enjoyable function though a speech or two exceeded the time limit.

The discussions generally at the various sessions reached a high level of usefulness, and disclosed a happy and gradual disappearance

of the "slap-stick" type of argument which although it may afford a humorous relief adds little to the dignity of the Association, and leads to nothing of constructive value. And surely too, is it not about time that the friendly (or otherwise) rivalry of two large northern towns ceased to be exaggerated into a thing of national importance? Moreover as a topic for humour it is nearly as fresh as the landlady and mother-in-law class of joke.

Friday saw a rapid and steady melting away but 180 remained to enjoy a very crowded day's char-a-banc excursion. The weather favoured the wise and righteous for the day was pleasantly fine. At York where the first stop was made a most enjoyable and fascinating hour and a half was spent in the world famous Minster. Here the Rev. Fred. Harrison, M.A., F.S.A., College of Vicars Choral, described the Minster with care and charm, and gave a short account of the Chapter Library which although in a somewhat disorganised state at present, for lack of funds, contains many valuable and rare books, including a relatively large number of books printed before 1500. After lunch in York the tour was continued via Boroughbridge and Ripon to Fountains Abbey where a long stay was arranged in order that a thorough inspection could be carried out under the expert guidance of Dr. Offor. To one who paid his first visit to such a spot the charm, the beauty, the glory, the sweet calm of that pride of Yorkshire—and of England, too—created a vision in the mind which time can never destroy. To see it is to feel, to understand. Harrogate, the very modern, succeeded the æsthetic joys of Fountains. His Worship the Mayor, Sir Ernest Bain, K.B.E., awaited our coming and entertained us to welcome tea and words of cheerful greeting. A pleasant ride through Harewood brought the day's travels to an end. A truly glorious day and a fitting end to a memorable Conference.

Yorkshire hospitality is proverbial; and all experienced the depth and thoroughness of that hospitality. It rang true and came from the heart. To the very many kind folk of Leeds the best and grateful thanks of all are due. Alderman Percival T. Leigh, Chairman of the Reception Committee, and Mr. T. Hand, the Chief Librarian, were the very soul of courtesy and charm. Mr. Hand, it is generally known is relinquishing his office in a very short time. He will depart in a sunshine of glory; a man proud and happy in the knowledge that Leeds will remain for many a long day in the affectionate memory of his brother librarians, and that in his very last year of service he organized and carried through a most successful Conference. His efforts were unobtrusively, but just as thoughtfully supported by his many assistants—Mr. G. W. Strother, Mr. N. Treliving, Mr. W. Proctor, among them—all names respected in the A.A.L. and worthiest among its members.

Wednesday evening was put aside for the purpose of the Annual General Business Meeting. One hour amply sufficed to finish off a tame and lifeless affair. True several members heroically endeavoured

to infuse a little vigour and excitement into the business but the meeting lacked fire. Indeed those who neglected their duty and preferred the charms of Zena Dare were the objects of envy. The Annual Report of the Council represents a year's solid and useful achievement and reveals evidences of quiet but steady progress. One passage in the report on the School of Librarianship inspired Mr. G. F. Vale (Vice-President of the A.A.L.) to make a useful proposition. The passage referred to the grant made by the London County Council to the School for the provision of part time places for assistants in London, and added "This, we believe is largely the result of a deputation to the Chief Education Officer from the Association of Assistant Librarians who evidently helped to convince the Education Committee of the reasonableness of their claims for consideration." Mr. Vale suggested that the Council of the Library Association should be instructed to approach the County Councils of Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Middlesex, Herts, Essex, with West Ham and Croydon, with a request that the example of the London County Council should be followed. Several members from the northern towns wished to extend the geographical limits of Mr. Vale's proposition, but as he pointed out, an assistant in Lancashire could not very well become a part time student at the London School of Librarianship. However, Mr. Vale's excellent suggestion was unanimously adopted and a further one carried that the L.A. Council should open negotiations with the county and other local authorities in the north of England with the object of establishing a separate School of Librarianship for the distant provincial assistants.

The motion of Mr. T. Johnston to introduce a sort of honorary fellowship as the reward of a certain number of years of full membership was most skilfully shipwrecked before any of the members had an opportunity of discussing, at any rate, the spirit of Mr. Johnston's motion. The present financial position reflects the very greatest credit on the Council. The heavy and depressing deficit of five years ago has now been converted into a cheerful and healthy balance of fair proportions.

All members were pleased to see Mr. Pacy back again after his recent and severe illness and to notice that though perhaps still a little weak in body he is just as active in mind and as ready in wit and speech.

At the conclusion of the Annual General Business Meeting, Dr. Guppy took his leave of the Conference for his departure to the States to head the delegation from England to the jubilee celebration of the American Library Association. He took with him a long and hearty message of greetings and goodwill from his English confrères gathered in Conference at Leeds. In Dr. Guppy the Association has secured a President who will well and worthily maintain the prestige and dignity both of the Association and of the profession. In honouring Dr. Guppy we have honoured ourselves. He is one of the few librarians who have

risen from our own ranks to the highest position the Association can offer him. His earnestness, devotion, lofty intention and high mindedness place Dr. Guppy high in the affectionate esteem of all who are privileged to share contact with him.

ZENO.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

- Bates (H. E.). *The Two Sisters* : a novel. (Cape, 7/6.)
In an introduction, Edward Garnett states that in his opinion this novel is "a rare achievement of no mean order."
- Bell (Aubrey). *Contemporary Spanish Literature*. (Knopf, 10/6.)
An authoritative book which, being unique in its scope, fills a gap in modern literary criticism.
- Best (Elsdon). *The Maori*. 2 vols. (Wellington, N.Z., 15/-.)
The author is regarded by competent judges as the greatest living authority on his subject. The publication of this book has been made possible by the Board of Maori Ethnological Research, from whom it may be obtained, for the absurdly low price of two "best-sellers."
- Carr-Saunders (A. M.). *The Population Problem* : a study in human evolution. 1922. (Oxford Univ. Pr., 21/-.)
"The most important book in this field since Malthus . . . So large and comprehensive a collection of facts has never been made before . . . Mr. Carr-Saunders has written a book which . . . is indispensable to all who take any interest in the fundamental problems of human welfare."
—Havelock Ellis.
- Cowl (R. P.). *Editor*. *The Theory of Poetry in England*. (Macmillan, 6/6.)
I first heard of this book in some notes by "Affable Hawk" of the "New Statesman." It was published in 1914, and is extremely valuable to students of criticism and literary history. It is an anthology of excerpts from essays, books, etc., on the technique of poetry, skilfully drawn from great authors and obscure places.
- Fausset (H. I'A.). *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. (Cape, 12/6.)
"A book which may not be immediately fashionable, but has every appearance of being a serious contribution to the standard books on Coleridge."
—Richard Aldington, in *The Nation and the Athenæum*.
- Jusserand (J. J.). *A Literary History of the English People from the Origins to the Civil War*. 2 vols. (F. Unwin, 30/-.)
"No history of our literature gives so much aid towards a fine understanding of the spirit of the early centuries."
—Allardyce Nicoll, in *The Nation and the Athenæum*.
- Lefroy (E. C.). *Echoes from Theocritus, and Other Poems*. (Selwyn and Blount, 5/-.)
This is a reprint, issued some years ago, of a small volume published in 1885 by Elliot Stock. The writer, a parish clergyman, attracted very little attention until J. A. Symonds, responding to the Greek spirit of Lefroy, wrote an article on him. The above book is still in print, I believe, and is prettily decorated by John Austen. How genuine was Lefroy's poetic gift may readily be seen by the following sonnet, "Art that endures" :—

"Marble of Paros, bronze that will not rust,
Onyx or agate-sculptor, choose thy block !
Not clay nor wax nor perishable stock
Of earthly stones can yield a virile bust
Keen-edged against the centuries. Strive thou must
In molten brass or adamantine rock
To carve the strenuous shape which shall not mock
Thy faith by crumbling dust upon thy dust.
Poet, the warning comes not less to thee !
Match well thy metres with a strong design.
Let noble themes find nervous utterance. Flee
The frail conceit, the weak mellifluous line.
High thoughts, hard forms, toil, rigour, these be thine
And steadfast hopes of immortality."

Lull (R. S.). *The Ways of Life.* (Harper, 10/6.)

"A stimulating new book . . . which we wish so much to recommend."

—J. Arthur Thomson, in *The New Statesman*.

MacNaghten (Hugh). *Translator.* Little Masterpieces from the Greek Anthology. (Gowans and Gray, 1/-.)

A wonderful shilling's worth. Comprises readable translations of those poems in the Greek Anthology which are suitable for boys and girls, together with some parallel passages in the English poets.

Meyer (R. M.). *Editor.* The Twelve Best Short Stories in the German language. (Gowans and Gray, 2/6.)

An anthology of this nature was very badly needed. The selection includes stories from Schiller, Hoffman, Goethe (Carlyle's translation), Tieck, Keller, and others.

Trevelyan (G. M.). *A New History of England for Colleges and Schools.* (Longmans, 12/6.)

Turner (W. J.). *Orpheus ; or, the future of music. To-day and To-morrow Series.* (K. Paul, 2/6.)

A very stimulating little book which has received high praise from Ernest Newman in the "Sunday Times," and which is undoubtedly one of the most important books in the series to which it belongs.

F. S. S.

OUR LIBRARY.

Aberdeen Public Library. Subject-Index Catalogue of Lending Department. viii. + 217 pp. Paper. 1926.

"For detail subjects of all kinds, including a great number of subjects not touched by the mere general card catalogue, and arranged here in alphabetical order (as compared with the classified order of the Card Catalogue), this Index-Catalogue is intended to be a constant aid. The entry-headings show the subjects on which books are available, and the class-numbers show the location of the books on the shelves." The alphabetical author initial follows the classification number of the book and in many cases this results in a class number which is a mixture of nine figures and letters. These lengthy numbers are not peculiar to Aberdeen ; the practice has been in existence for many years in a number of libraries, and we seriously question whether this hyper-classification or rather individualising of books is really necessary. We hope that there will not be any further developments in this direction for as we

facetiously remarked some years ago it may be found necessary to place books two inches apart on the shelves in order that the class number, which had spread from the back to the front cover, could be read in its entirety.

Bolton Public Libraries. Catalogue of Books in the Central Lending and Reference Libraries: Class List No. 3, Useful Arts. vi. + 282 pp. Boards. 1926. Bolton P. L.: 6d., post free, 11d.

This is a revised and enlarged edition of the issue published in 1912 and includes books added to 31st March of this year. The catalogue is in three sections—class list, author index, and subject index. The catalogue is somewhat marred by uneven printing.

Bristol Public Libraries. Syllabus of Half-Hour Talks to Children. 12 pp.

A neat little pamphlet with an illustration showing the children inspecting exhibits after a half-hour talk and indicating the great care taken to make these short talks attractive. A select list of books appears beneath the title of each talk.

Class List of Books on Sociology. viii. + 168 pp. Paper. 1926. Central Library for Students. 1/-.

This is the beginning of a series of class-lists. The demand for books on Sociology has been so great that it has been felt that a class list would be extremely useful to the users of the library. This list should prove useful not only to students but to librarians who are building up a sociological collection. The Dewey classification has been used and a separate subject index and author index appear at the end of the volume. With regard to the books in the catalogue there are a number of standard works that are represented by old editions, and in consequence of doubtful value. Still, even these and a few errors in the names of authors do not detract from the usefulness of this volume.

Reading With a Purpose. Wilkinson, Marguerite. The Poetry of Our Own Times. 82 pp. Mumford, Lewis. Architecture. 85 pp. Chicago, U.S.: A.L.A. 35c. paper, 50c. cloth each.

Mr. Mumford quotes Ruskin as asking of architecture whether it contributed to our mental health, power and pleasure, and saying that if it did not do so it was bad architecture. We should ask the same of our reading, and seek in every way to be able to make our answer in the affirmative. These valuable little pamphlets of the American Library Association, should be of great use in introducing "the ordinary reader" to specialized fields of study and deserve a wide circulation. Mrs. Wilkinson, who was poetry critic of the "New York Times," tells in a few words the importance of poetry in everyday life, and then deals briefly with the leading poets of England, Ireland and America, concluding with a list of anthologies, which should be in all public libraries. Mr. Mumford follows a condensed and skilful account of architecture with a suggested course of reading. Every public library should immediately secure a set of this useful little series.

E. R. McC.

NEW MEMBERS.

H. G. K. Bearman (Leyton); A. L. Carver (Swindon); Miss I. L. Dean (Watford); W. C. Pugsley (Bath).

YORKSHIRE DIVISION.—Miss H. M. Harvey, Miss B. Shaw (County Library, Wakefield); Miss G. Eastwood (Huddersfield).

THE DIVISIONS.

YORKSHIRE DIVISION.

A Meeting of the Division was held at Bolling Hall, Bradford, on June 23rd, by kind permission of W. E. Preston, Esq., Director of the Art Gallery and Museums.

Members assembled at Bolling Hall Museum; and in the unavoidable absence of Mr. E. C. Wickens (Liverpool), who was to have given an address on "The Future Development of the Public Library Idea—and of Librarian-ship," Mr. Preston gave an exceedingly interesting talk on the Collection of Local Maps, Plans, Deeds, etc., in the Libraries and Museums. Mr. Preston explained how such an extensive and useful collection had been procured, and the long and careful researches that had been necessary in its formation.

On behalf of the members Mr. W. Proctor (Armley) proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Preston; this was seconded and supported by Mr. R. W. Parsons (Bradford), and Mr. W. Marr (Sheffield).

An excellent tea was served in Bowling Park. After tea members re-assembled at Bolling Hall, and toured the Hall under the guidance of the Superintendent, Mr. H. J. N. Maltby. The architectural structure of the Hall was detailed, and Mr. Maltby also outlined the different periods during which the various parts of the Hall were built, the different families who had lived at Bolling Hall, and of the part Bolling Hall played in the Siege of Bradford in 1643.

The Exhibition of ancient furniture, weapons, utensils, etc., forming the exceptionally fine and extensive collection at Bolling Hall was greatly admired. "Home Time" came all too soon, many having to leave to catch their trains before the Tour of the Hall had been completed. Not unmindful of our indebtedness to Mr. Maltby, cordial thanks were tendered to him for his very able services as "guide, philosopher and friend."

APPOINTMENTS.

COLWELL, Miss E. H., Bolton Public Libraries, to be Children's Librarian to the Hendon Urban District Council.

*WOODHAM, W. H., Junior Assistant, Reference Dept., Croydon Public Libraries to be Senior Assistant, Wood Green Public Library. Salary, £80 and bonus, at present £64.

* Member A.A.L.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor, THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.

14, WOOD STREET, HUDDERSFIELD.

14th September, 1926.

A BOOKSELLER'S REPLY TO MR. F. S. SMITH.

DEAR SIR,

Perhaps as an Associate Member of the Library Association, and a reader of your excellent magazine, I may be permitted to answer some of the points raised by your contributor, Mr. F. S. Smith, in his delightful article "Borrowing and Buying," in the September issue?

Surely Mr. Smith's reasoning is based on a fallacy? Libraries certainly create an appetite for reading, but every really good library feeds nay, satiates, that appetite to the fullest extent possible. The modern users of Public Libraries are not coaxed into becoming Dominie Samsons, but they read the books

they find there and are satisfied. They flit gaily from a Dell to a Dickens, and but rarely consider the purchase of a copy for themselves.

As a philanthropist I thank Heaven for the Public Library idea—as a purveyor of what I believe to be indispensable to human evolution, I say: “There but for those confounded Public Libraries goes a subscriber to my income.”

Mr. Smith should spend his next holiday in a bookshop, when I think he would learn far more about the psychology of the book-buyer than he apparently knows at present of the daily sales of a bookseller. Bookshops are the sort of place where most people resort in extremity—when they have just missed a car, or when it is pouring with rain, and the Public Library is too far away. And then what happens? They bring a book to the assistant with the remark: “What will you take for this? I will sport a bob.” Then too, it is always necessary for the assistant to be on the look-out for book thieves, as a casual glance at a trade paper any week will prove the activities of the latter.

Excluding such shops as Sotheby’s, the average bookshop is supported—indeed could not exist without—the following classes of persons:—

- (1) The true bibliophile, who loves browsing and handling books, and who finds it necessary constantly to replace books lent by him to friends and never returned.
- (2) The student, who wants his books at his side from September to June.
- (3) The casual buyer who has remembered a birthday, or is getting his Christmas presents.

The last named class, I should add, is gradually on the increase, due chiefly if not wholly, to the advertising campaign recently inaugurated by the Associated Booksellers.

As my own shop is situated a few yards only from the local Public Library, I am amazed at the paucity of response on the part of that “great general public” to the efforts of a committee who allot something like £1,000 annually for new books.

Nevertheless, Sir, I look forward to the time when we shall have to pay for each book we get from the Public Library. Whoever imagines the tramways being free, the public baths being thrown open to every slum dweller, who might wash and be cleansed gratis and for nothing? Would not the producing of a steady revenue, instead of the expenditure of large annual sums, give the greater pleasure to nine out of every ten city fathers?

I am, Sir, Very truly yours,

KENNETH ROSS DAVIS.

Mr. F. S. Smith’s rejoinder:—

The Honorary Editor has asked me to make a reply to the foregoing letter. To begin with, may I express my pleasure, shared, I feel sure, by many others, at Mr. Davis’s broadminded outlook on books, libraries and the public, which enables him to “Thank heaven for the public library idea,” even though he thinks his bank balance is smaller because of its existence and popularity. In future I shall class him with that enlightened bookseller who, writing recently to Constable’s, expressed a truth in a forcible phrase when he said “The town that rejects the public library is the town that is most in need of it.”

As I said in my article, if I am fortunate, Mr. Jonathan Cape will publish a fairly lengthy review of the arguments and ideas surrounding this erroneous opinion held by booksellers, for I still think it erroneous in spite of Mr. Davis’s arguments. The question is an old one now, as old as libraries themselves; yet it can be seen how necessary it is that a periodical re-statement should be made of the librarian’s point of view; for within the last month Mr. Davis is the third bookseller to state publicly that the book trade suffers from the competition of the municipal library.

Let me deal with Mr. Davis's points as he states them. "Libraries," he says, "create an appetite for reading." Nobody will deny that; indeed it is the premise of my own argument which seeks to prove exactly the reverse of Mr. Davis's. When, however, he goes on to say that libraries satiate that appetite I am only partially in agreement with him. In a large number of cases this is true; but a great proportion of the public, I claim, would not read at all if it were not for the municipal libraries. Probably a fair percentage of our public read Rohmer, Dell, Garvice, Carey and Braddon, when they join the library. After their funera their widows or orphans return "some library books found at home;" you look at them sadly; the deceased borrower's last reading is, alas, like their first, Braddon, Carey, Garvice, Dell and Rohmer. This reading of light fiction and vapid non-fiction by a public which never develops and which does not really know how to read, is, I think, a legitimate demand on municipal libraries, but it does not, and cannot, lead anywhere—not even to the "penny-a-time tub." Mr. Davis and his colleagues think that many of this class of reader would buy books if they did not own them communally. I cannot agree, for sad to confess, an all too large proportion of our libraries have such a small income that they cannot even pretend to satisfy, let alone satiate, these popular readers, who are the most troublesome of all. They read the latest triviality in a day and want three or four new novels a week to keep them from grumbling. If every public library were to close to-morrow, it is not these people who would crowd into the bookshops. Space forbids examples, but I have known quite a number of cases in which regular borrowers for years at a library have at some time or another been annoyed at having been made to pay a penny fine, and in consequence have handed in their tickets for cancellation as a protest. Quite suddenly it seems, without a pang, without any emotion at all, they can cease reading. No, the people who would throng the bookshops are a powerful minority of real readers. Now a real reader is a man of sense. He knows, for instance, that it is foolish to borrow poetry, except of course for reference; he knows that he will never read Doughty's "Arabia Deserta," unless he buys a copy for himself (that is why the cheap 30s. edition went out of print in a month); he knows that he must have Proust by his elbow (for those pages wherein are analysed a deaf man's feelings on watching milk boil over must be marked); and finally his wife realises that beautiful books on low shelves make a room look admirable, even if they do collect dust. The library has not only partially created this minority, but it also keeps it well-informed of the best books of our own time and reminds it of the best of past ages. The publisher can advertise his books for a month or two only. How is it, then, that good books are not totally forgotten after a year or two? The answer is—because the libraries and their readers perpetually advertise them. Here is an example to hand. Recently I borrowed a book which I should never buy and which I should never have seen if I did not belong to a public library—it was Mackail's new book on poetry. It contains an essay on Fanshawe, and, more important still, a quotation from Lady Fanshawe's memoirs. This lady and her book were quite unknown to me before, but so delighted was I by this charming quotation that I determined to buy a copy. The book was out of print, but by great luck, I happened to pass by my "gutter-Sotheby's" (mentioned last month), and here, to my delight and astonishment, I found Lady Fanshawe's book, priced one shilling. That book now looks me in the face proudly, like an aristocrat rescued from the low estate into which she had fallen. And the bookseller?—he must thank the public library for his shilling.

Mr. Davis deplores his daily sales. I repeat, the library next door will increase rather than decrease them. If my colleagues at Huddersfield form a book club I can see him opening a branch shop yet! As for book thieves, booksellers are not the only people who are troubled by them. These people, at any rate, are patrons of both establishments. Who created *this* appetite,

I wonder, the libraries or the shops? When those assistants eye me so suspiciously again I shall feel quite nervous, for their hidden fear is now revealed.

As for the last paragraph of Mr. Davis's letter, I can only say briefly that of course libraries are not free, since they cost each ratepayer a definite yearly sum; and I for one can imagine and hope for the day when tramways, baths, and every other provider of the essential needs of the body and the mind which can be supplied municipally will be thrown open to every citizen—not slum-dwellers, Sir, for there will be none in that not too-distant era.

I must ask pardon for the length of this reply, but the subject is a large one, and a criticism half-answered, means that convictions are half-hearted—"which is not the case."

I am, Yours, etc.,

F. S. SMITH.

Are You?

**Is your
Colleague?**

**A MEMBER
OF THE
A. A. L.**

**If not,
Why not?**

**If not,
Why not?**